

nc
WESTERN ADVENTURES

TIM HOLT

COWBOY STAR OF THE MOVIES

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TIM HOLT'S WESTERN ALBUM



TIM HOLT, on his great saddler Lightning, is about to call a turn (above) as he and his men follow an outlaw trail. The scene is from the RKO-Radio picture, "The Arizona Ranger."

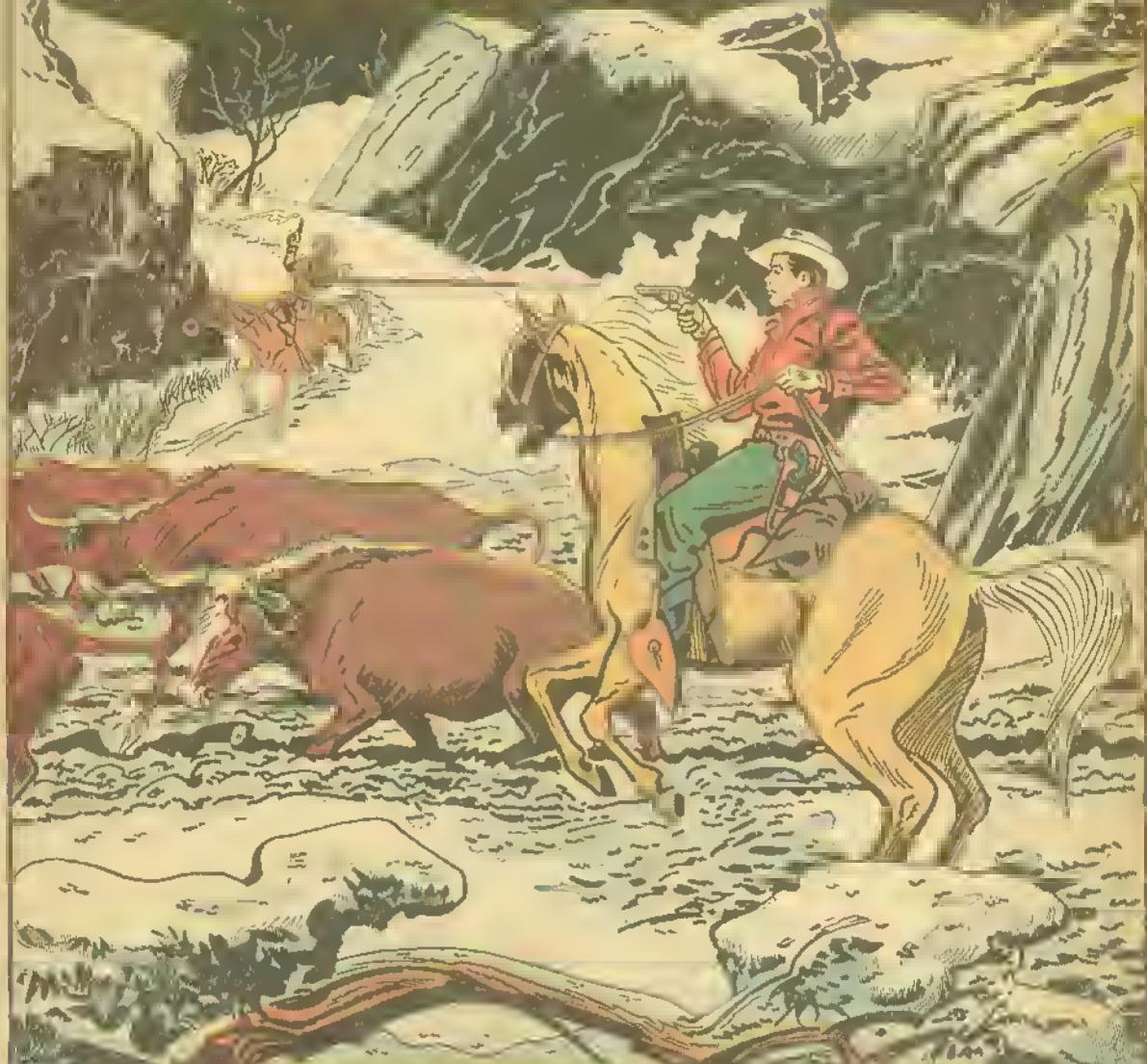
Looks like that one hurt! Tim uses his fists to get Tony Barrétt to talk (left). This is a sample of the slam-bang action that roars all through the picture, "Guns of Hate."

From the same RKO production, the scene below shows that good citizens sometimes get into a lot of trouble quite innocently. Here Tim and Chito sit in jail, wrongly charged with murder.



TIM HOLT

TIM HOLT



THE HAZARDS OF WINTER RANCHING INVOLVE MORE THAN JUST COLD WEATHER! AND WHEN SNOW BLIZZARDS, STARVING CATTLE AND THE DREADED 'CHINOOK' UNITE WITH DEVIL DAN BARNETT TO CRUSH THE SMALL RANCHERS OF RED CLOUD VALLEY-

THEN TIM HOLT AND HIS SAGEBRUSH PARTNER CHITO FIND THEMSELVES IN THE WORST STORM OF TROUBLE THEY HAVE EVER KNOWN AS THEY RIDE INTO---

THE WINTER WAR!

FRANK
BOLLE

TIM HOLT

THE PITIFUL BAWL OF STARVING CATTLE MOANS ACROSS THE SILENTLY DRIFTING SNOW, SOME MILES NORTH OF THE ARKANSAS DIVIDE, NEAR COMANCHE CREEK, COLORADO---

CHITO! THIS WAY! THESE STEERS ARE IN DANGER!

FOOL RANCHERS, LETTING FENCES STAND IN THIS WEATHER!

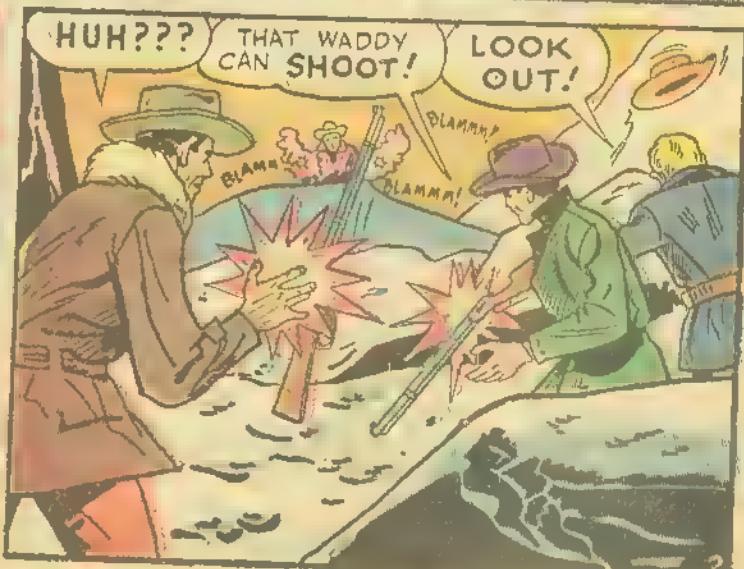
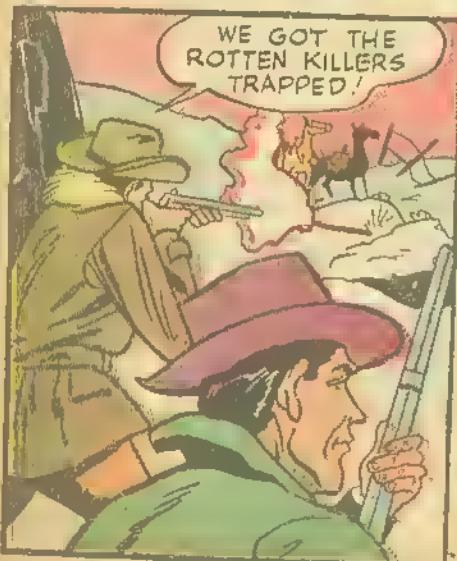


IN THE WHITE SILENCE, A WINCHESTER, CALIBER .44-40 BARKS VICIOUSLY!

TAKE COVER, CHITO! THOSE ROCKS--!

POUNING...

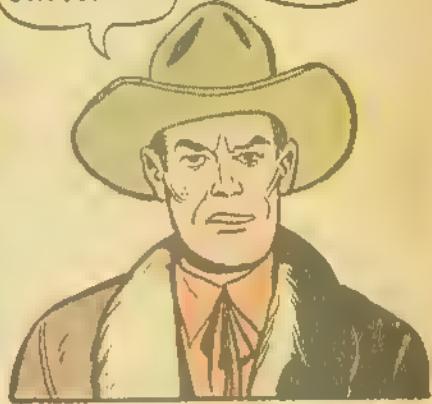
DON'T KNOW ME, I WHAT WE DID, WOULD BUT I'LL FIND RATHER ASK OUT SOON THEE QUESTIONS ENOUGH! AFTER I'VE SHOT THEE ONE WHO EES SHOOTING AT ME!



TIM HOLT



NO USE A-LYIN' TO US, STRANGER. WE KNOW DEVIL DAN BARNETT HIRED YUH, LIKE HE'S HIRED THOSE OTHER KILLERS! WE SAW YUH BUST DOWN OUR FENCE!



I SMASHED YOUR FENCE TO SAVE YOUR CATTLE! DON'T YOU KNOW STEERS HUDDLE AGAINST A FENCE IN WINTERTIME? THEY GET COVERED WITH DRIFT SNOW AND FREEZE TO DEATH!

RECKON I DIDN'T KNOW THAT. I'M NOT USED TO THESE NORTHERN WINTERS. WE'RE FROM ARKANSAS, ALL SMALL RANCHERS.

WHO IS THIS BARNETT YOU MENTIONED?

DEVIL DAN'S A BIG CATTLE-MAN. FIGURES HE OWNS OUR LAND AND WATERSHED. HE'S GOT TH' OLD-FASHIONED IDEA ABOUT FREE RANGE. WE BOUGHT TITLE FROM THE GOVERNMENT.



'COURSE NOT! HE HAS ALL THE WATER HE WANTS, BUT HE LIKES OUR GRAZE LAND, TOO. AND HE'S HIRED MEN TO SHOOT US, TO RUN OFF OUR STEERS.

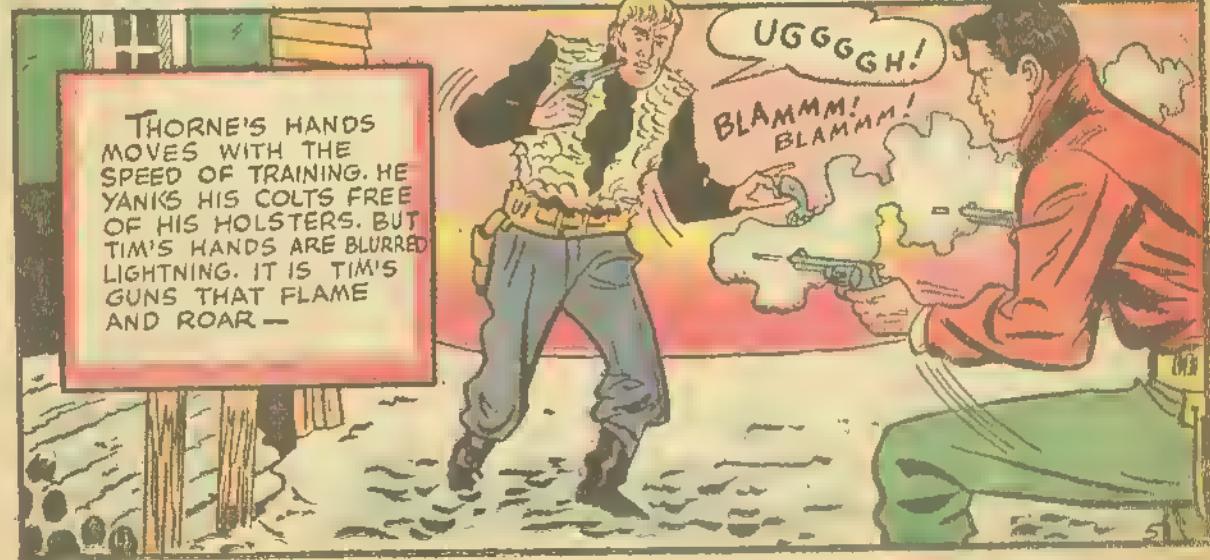


EVEN THE WEATHER IS HELPIN' HIM. WORST COLD AND MOST SNOW IN A LONG TIME, I HEAR. IF US SMALL RANCHERS DON'T GET THROUGH THE WINTER SAFELY — WE'RE LICKED!

TIM HOLT

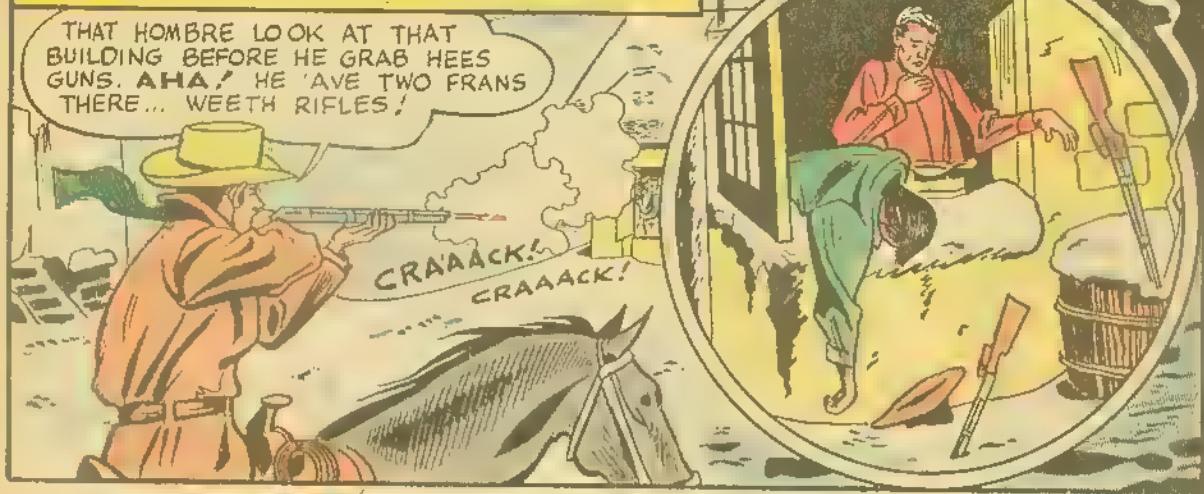


TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT

IN ECHO TO HIS PARTNER'S SIXGUNS, CHITO'S WINCHESTER CRACKS ONCE - TWICE!



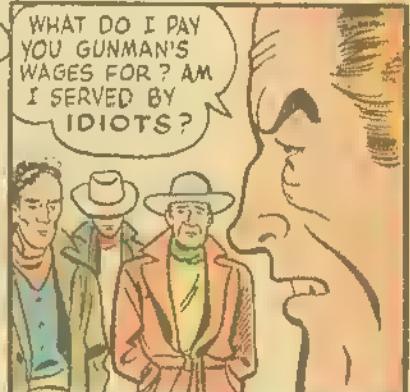
THAT WAS A COLD DECK THEY TRIED TO RUN ON US, CHITO! DEVIL DAN WANTED US KILLED!



NOT NEWS, EXACTLY. BUT SINCE HE'S DECLARED WAR AGAINST US, THIS BECOMES OUR FIGHT TOO, CHITO. WE'LL STAY RIGHT HERE AND SEE THIS THING OUT!



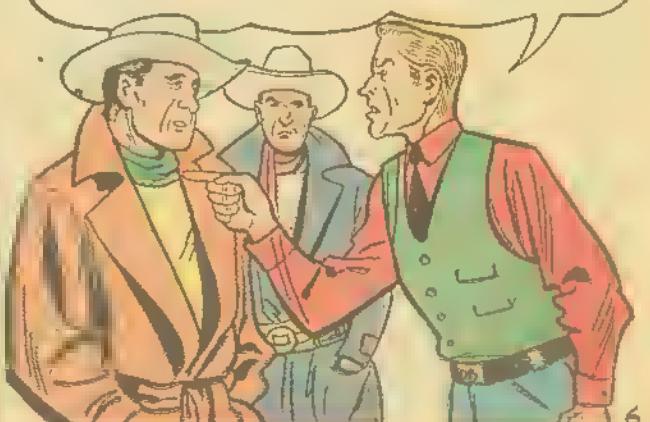
THAT NIGHT, DEVIL DAN BARNETT IS LIKE A MAN POSSESSED, AS HE RAGES AND CURSES IN HIS BIG CROOKED T LIVING ROOM---



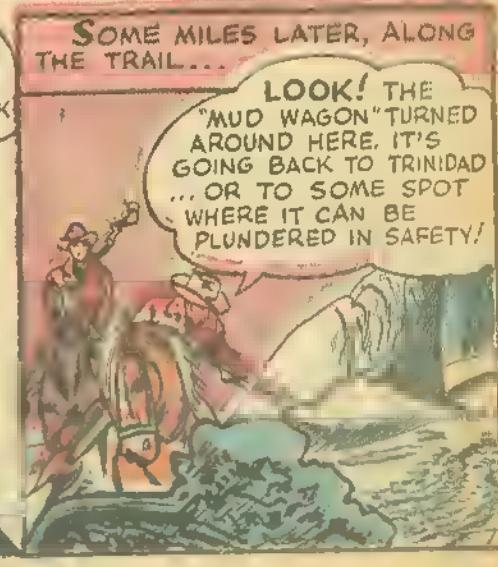
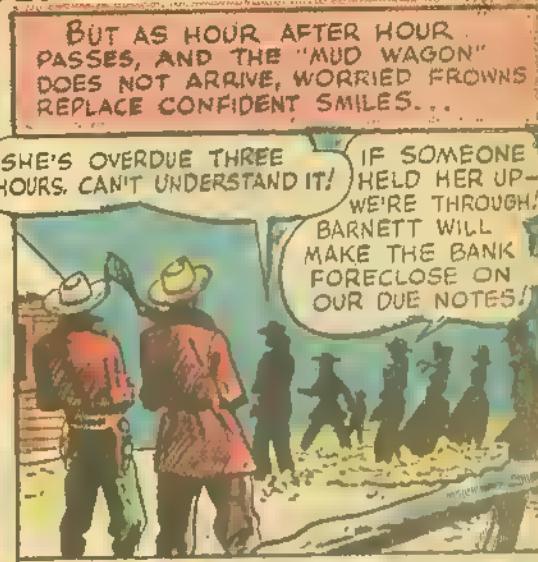
WHAT GOOD ARE YOU DOING ME? TWO STRANGERS WANT GUN MY THREE BEST MEN, AN' YOU SIT HERE DOIN' NOTHING!



I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I WANT. THE "MUD WAGON" FROM TRINIDAD IS BRINGIN' MONEY FOR THOSE RANCHERS - MONEY TO PAY SALARIES AND DUE NOTES. STOP IT!



TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT

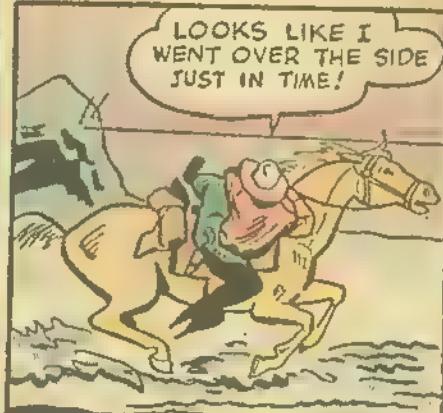
WITH LOOSE REINS, TIM AND CHITO RACE THEIR FLEET STALLIONS ACROSS THE SNOW-COVERED PRAIRIE. AN HOUR LATER —



FASTER, LIGHTNING!
FASTER, FASTER....



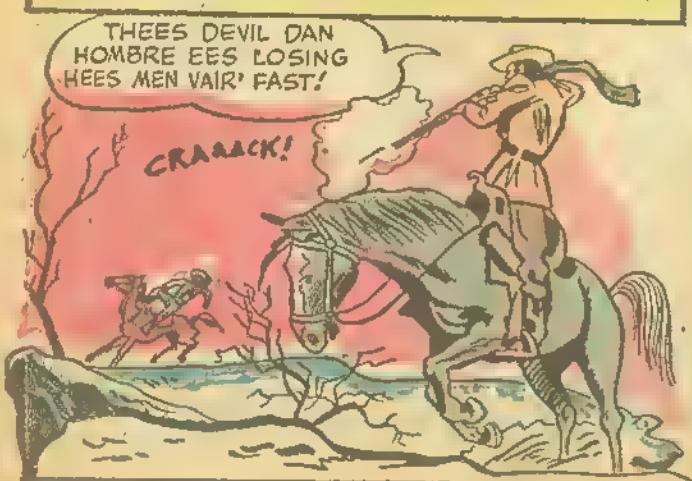
FOOT BY FOOT THE MIGHTY PALOMINO GAINS GROUND! WHEN HE IS EVEN WITH THE RUNNING 'MUD WAGON' AND ITS CAPTORS, TIM PULLS AN OLD INDIAN TRICK!



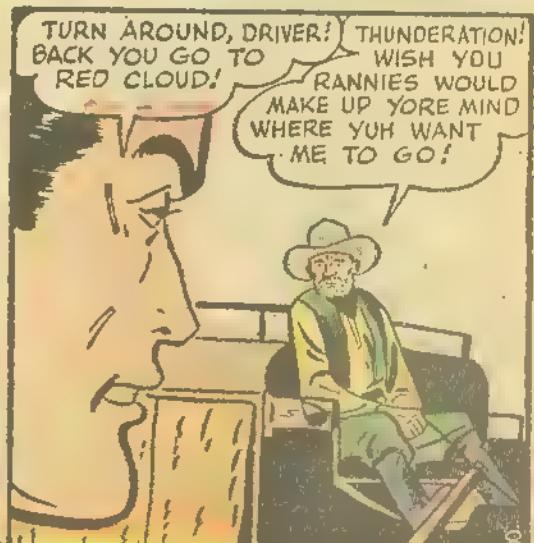
THEN, IN FULL GALLOP, HE RESUMES HIS SADDLE-WITH BOTH COLTS FLAMING!



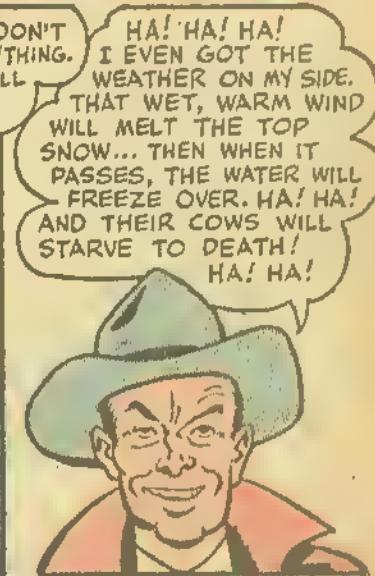
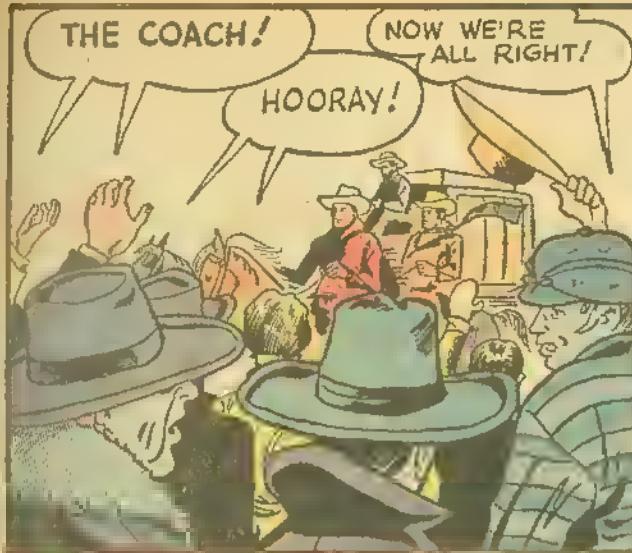
CHITO HAS NOT BEEN IDLE! AND IN HIS HANDS A WINCHESTER IS AS SURE AS SUNRISE!



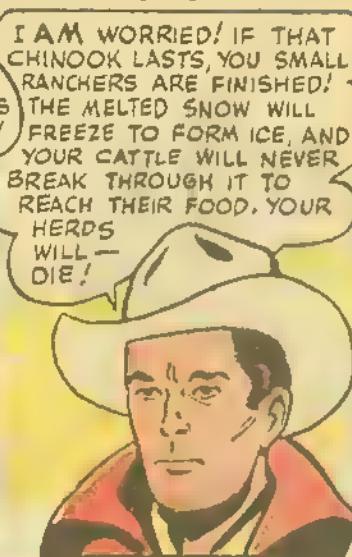
TURN AROUND, DRIVER! THUNDERATION! BACK YOU GO TO WISH YOU RED CLOUD!



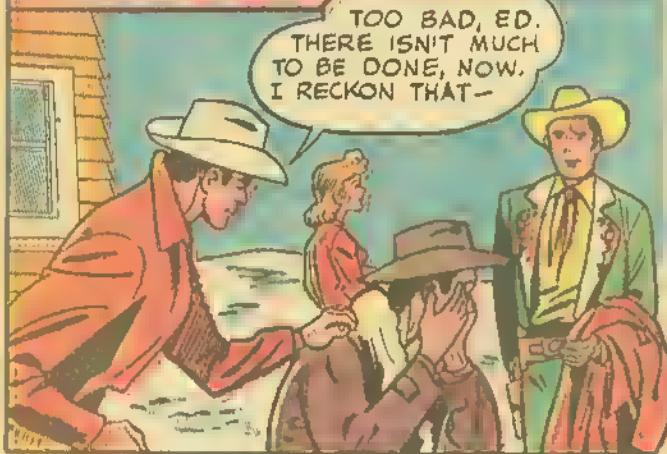
TIM HOLT



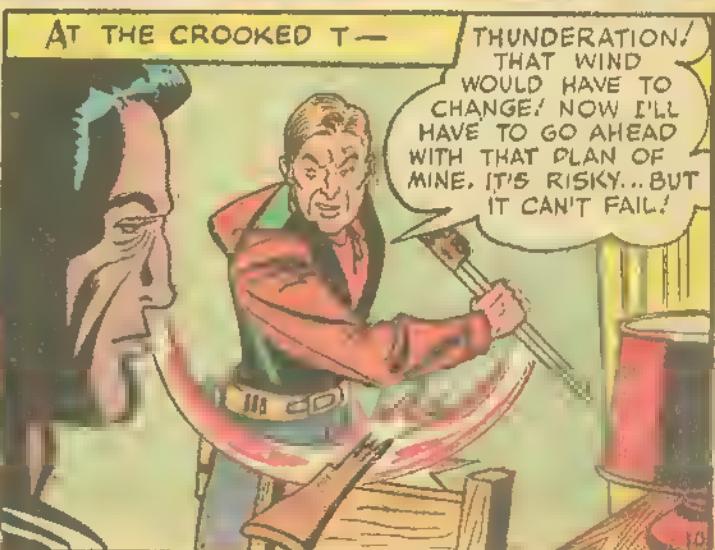
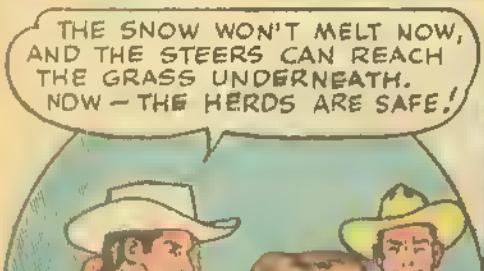
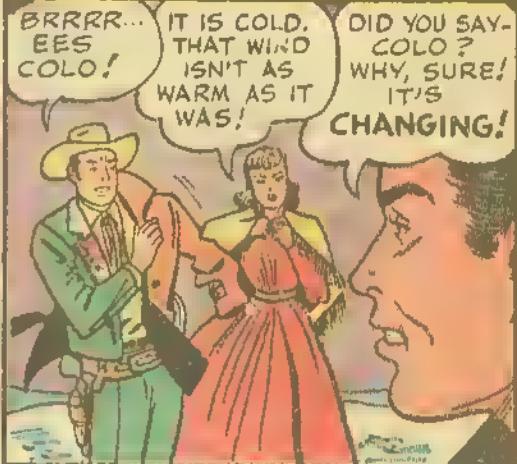
TIM HOLT



HOUR AFTER HOUR, THE SMALL RANCHERS, THEIR WIVES AND FRIENDS HUDDLE NEAR THE LOG RANCHHOUSE. THE WARM, WET WIND GROWS STRONGER---



AND THEN CHITO SHIVERS! A GIRL WRAPS HER SHAWL CLOSER ABOUT HER SHOULDERS —



TIM HOLT

SLOWLY THE DAYS OF WINTER CREEP INTO SPRING, AND WITH SPRING COME THE LASHING RAINS. ONE AFTERNOON, A FEW MILES OUTSIDE THE CROOKED T---



PLENTY SMART OF DAN TO COOK UP THIS RUSTLIN' SCHEME! KENO! THE RAIN'LL WASH AWAY OUR TRACKS. THEM RANCHERS'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR HERDS!



GIT ALONG THERE, DOGIE!

GIT THAR!
GIT...!



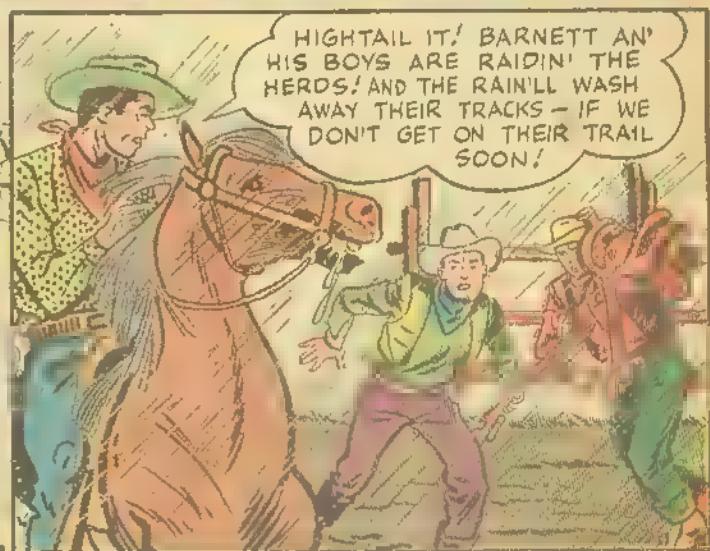
HIGH IN THE HILLS, WEATHER LOOKOUTS POSTED BY TIM SEE THE RUSTLERS IN THE VALLEY---



THE SLAP OF A QUIRT, THE SILENT JAB OF SPURS, AND A GALLOPING HORSE THUNDERS ACROSS THE SAGE FLATS---



HIGHTAIL IT! BARNETT AN' HIS BOYS ARE RAIDIN' THE HERDS! AND THE RAIN'LL WASH AWAY THEIR TRACKS - IF WE DON'T GET ON THEIR TRAIL SOON!

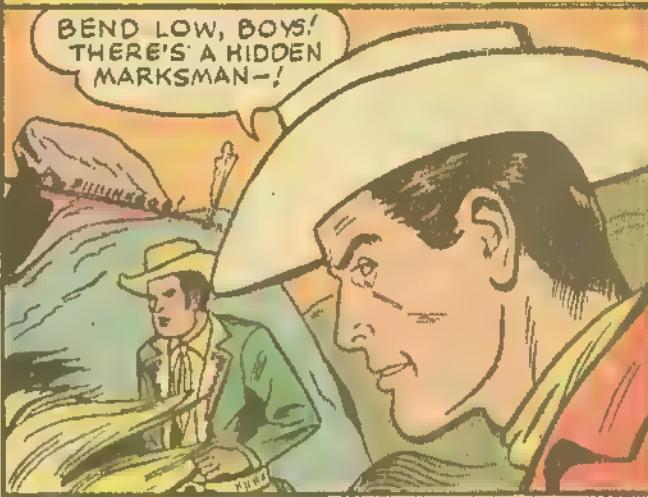


TIM HOLT

SOME OF YOU RIDE STRAIGHT FOR THE HERD. I'LL TAKE CHITO AND A COUPLE OF MEN AND TRY TO HEAD OFF THE RUSTLERS BEFORE THEY REACH THE CANYONS —



AN HOUR LATER, INSIDE THE DRAWS —



HIT COVER, CHITO! WE HAVE TO SMOKE HIM OUT BEFORE THE OTHER BOYS CAN RIDE THROUGH!



AS TIM CRAWLS FORWARD, CHITO WIGGLES A BUSH WITH THE BARREL OF HIS WINCHESTER.



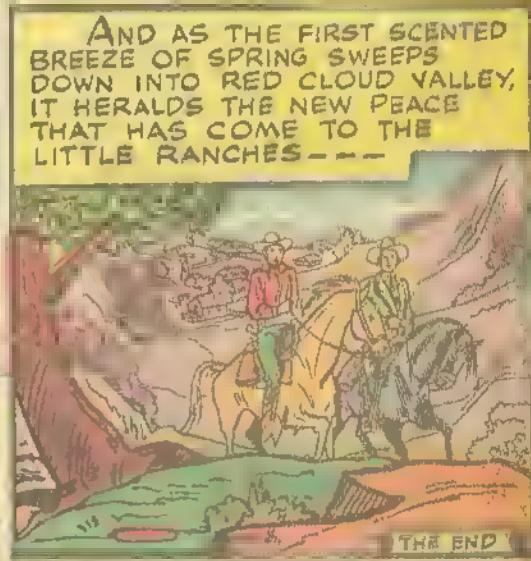
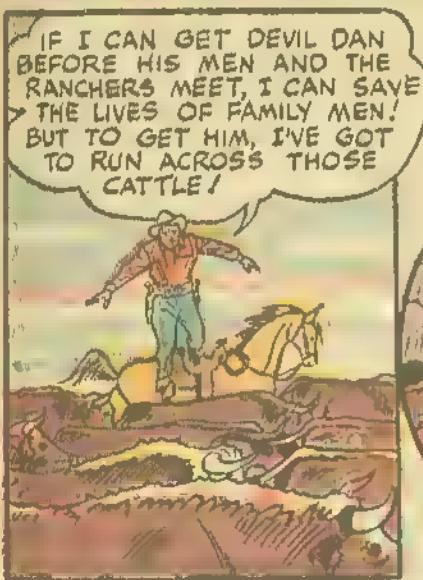
NOT THAT WAY, OWLHOOOT— OVER HERE!



TIM HOLT

FROM A CONNECTING DRAW, THE SMALL RANCHERS THUNDER DOWN ON THE CROOKED T RUSTLERS ---

FROM A NEARBY HILLTOP, DEVIL DAN BARNETT STABS SPURS DEEP INTO THE SIDE OF HIS SADDLER ---



THE END

TIM HOLT

TIM HOLT'S ROUNDUP



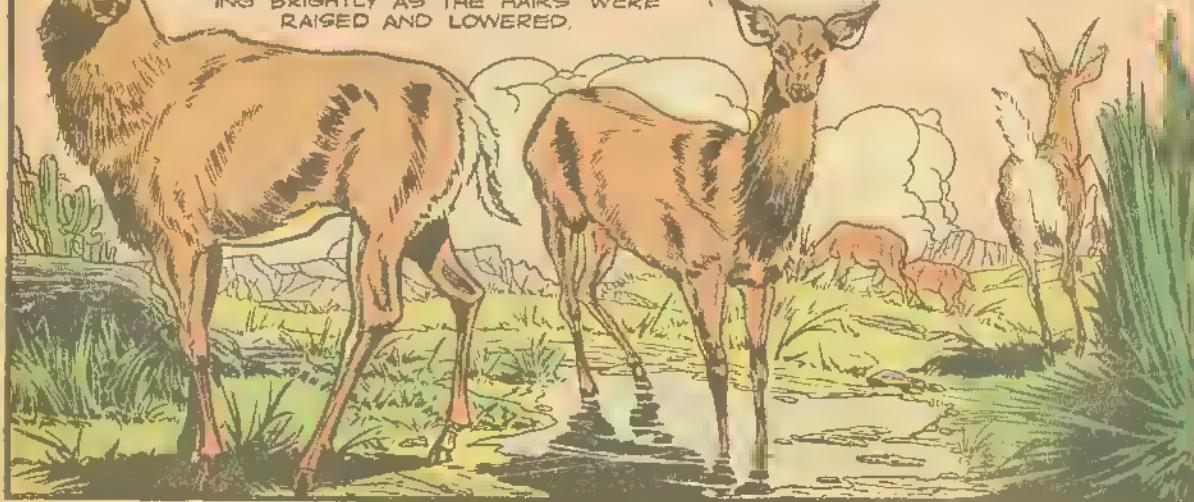
HOWDY PARTNERS !
MIGHTY FINE TO SEE YOU
ALL AGAIN AT ROUNDUP TIME /
LIGHT DOWN AND REST AND
WE'LL TELL YOU ABOUT A FEW
THINGS WE KNOW YOU'RE
HANKERING TO LEARN !

THE BUFFALO GUN...

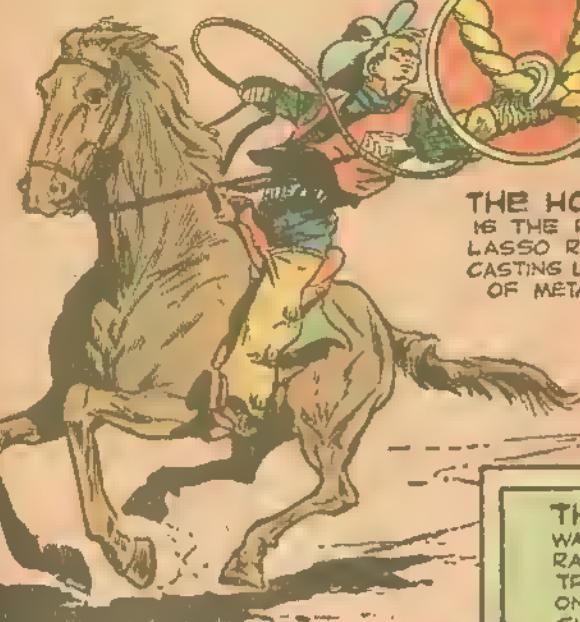
WAS A SHARPS RIFLE, A SINGLE ACTION GUN WITH A TREMENDOUS CHARGE.
IN THE HANDS OF THE BUFFALO HUNTERS, IT WAS A FEARSOME WEAPON
AND WHEN THE BUFFALO WERE GONE, IT STILL REMAINED POPULAR WITH
MARSHALLS AND COWHANDS.

THE PRONGHORN ANTELOPE...

THE FASTEST ANIMAL IN NORTH AMERICA, THE ANTELOPE ROAMED FROM
CANADA TO MEXICO. BROAD WHITE SECTIONS OF HAIR ON ITS RUMP
FORMED A DANGER SIGNAL VISIBLE FOR INCREDIBLE DISTANCES, FLASH-
ING BRIGHTLY AS THE HAIRS WERE
RAISED AND LOWERED.

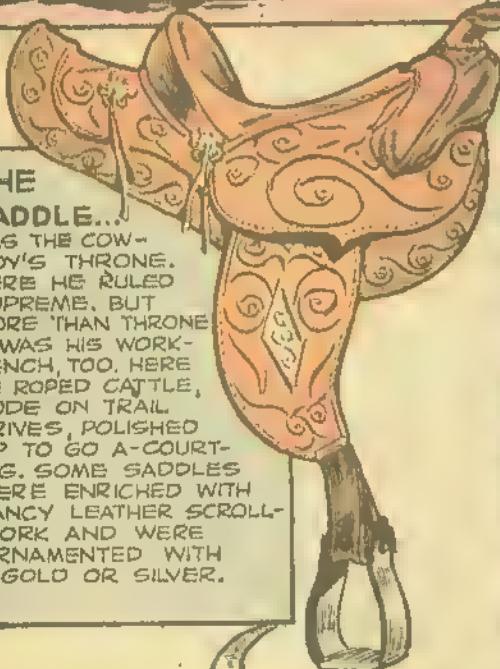


TIM HOLT



THE HONDA...

IS THE RING THROUGH WHICH THE LASSO ROPE SLIDES TO FORM A CASTING LOOP. IT IS MADE EITHER OF METAL, BONE OR MERE ROPE.



THE SADDLE...

WAS THE COW-BOY'S THRONE. HERE HE RULED SUPREME. BUT MORE THAN THRONE IT WAS HIS WORK-BENCH, TOO. HERE HE ROPED CATTLE, RODE ON TRAIL DRIVES, POLISHED UP TO GO A-COURTING. SOME SADDLES WERE ENRICHED WITH FANCY LEATHER SCROLL-WORK AND WERE ORNAMENTED WITH GOLD OR SILVER.

THE "CHUCK WAGON"...

WAS AN INDISPENSABLE PART OF THE WESTERN RANCH, USED IN ROUNDUPS AND ON LONG TRAIL DRIVES, IT WAS 'HOME' FOR MONTHS ON END TO THE COWPOKE. HERE HE ATE, SWAPPED TALL STORIES, AND SLEPT IN ITS SHADOW BEFORE HIS TURN TO STAND NIGHT GUARD ON THE HERD.



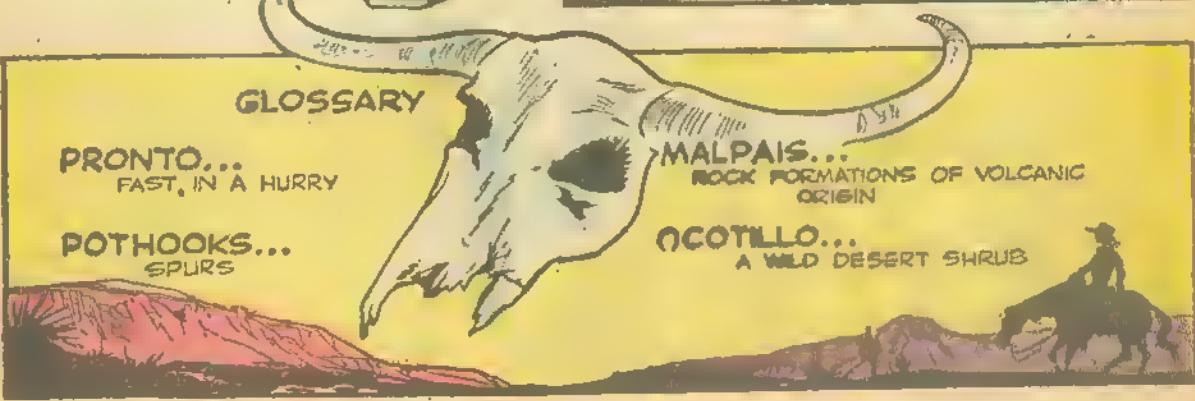
GLOSSARY

PRONTO...
FAST, IN A HURRY

POTHOOKS...
SPURS

MALPAIS...
ROCK FORMATIONS OF VOLCANIC ORIGIN

OCOTILLO...
A WILD DESERT SHRUB



TIM HOLT

TIM HOLT



THE GREAT FREIGHT WAGONS THAT TRUNDLED ACROSS THE PRAIRIES WERE STRONG LURES TO THE WARLIKE INDIANS ON THEIR PAINT AND PIEBALD PONIES. WITH WAR WHOOP AND WAR ARROW, THEY FELL LIKE RAVENING WOLVES ON THE HUGE COVERED VANS!

HOWEVER, THE INNOCENT INDIAN WAS OFTEN BLAMED FOR THE DEPREDATIONS OF THE BAD INDIAN - AND WHEN MONEY-HUNGRY WHITE MEN FANNED THE SAVAGES' DESIRES WITH ROTTEN WHISKEY - THEN TIM HOLT AND HIS PARTNER CHITO FOUND THEMSELVES WITH AN ARMFUL OF TROUBLE

ALONG THE WAR-WHOOP TRAIL!

FEATHERED HEADDRESSES WHIPPING IN THE WIND,
PAINTED COMANCHES FALL ON A FREIGHT-WAGON
TRAIN SOME MILES EAST OF FORT DEFIAENCE ---

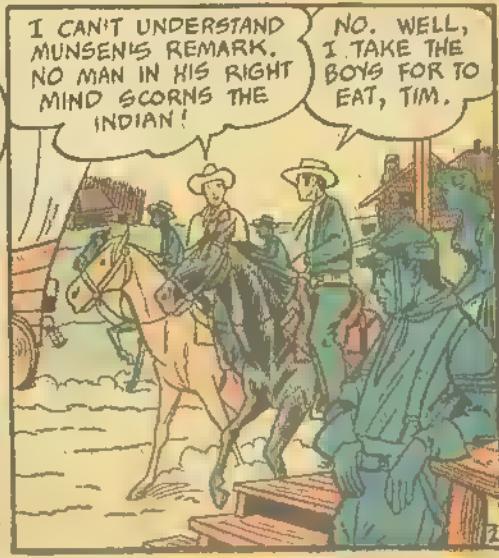
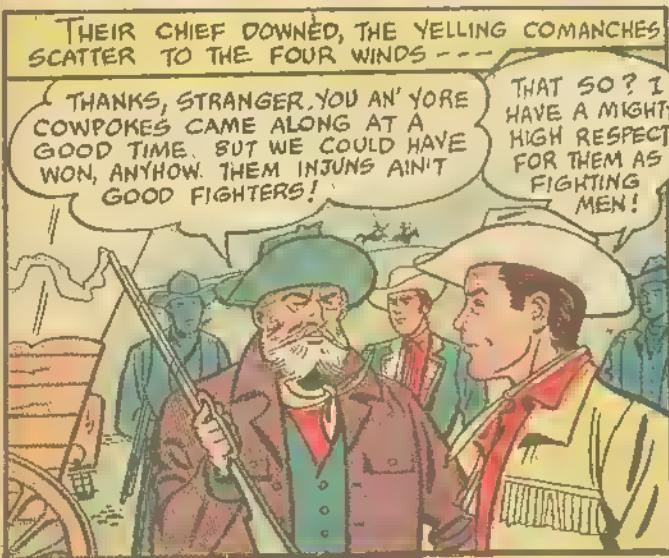


TIM HOLT

TOPPING A HUMMOCK OF SAND, TIM HOLT WITH CHITO AND A HALF DOZEN OF HIS T-BAR H COWHANDS WHIP THEIR MOUNTS TO A HARD GALLOP!

COMANCHES ON THE WAR-PATH, BOYS! LET'S GO GET 'EM!

THE BOYS WILL BREAK UP THE INDIANS' SPEED... GIVE THE WAGON GUARDS BETTER TARGETS...



TIM HOLT

IN THE SADDLER SHOP NEAR THE FORT'S PALISADE ---

COMANCHE LANCE GASHED MY SADDLE. LIKE TO HAVE IT STITCHED UP.

YUH CAN WAIT, SON. WON'T TAKE VERY LONG.

LOOKS AS THOUGH MUNSEN HAS CORRALED AN INDIAN, BUT -

COME ON, YOU! I RECOGNIZED YUH AS ONE OF TH' INJUNS THAT ATTACKED MY WAGONS!

NO!



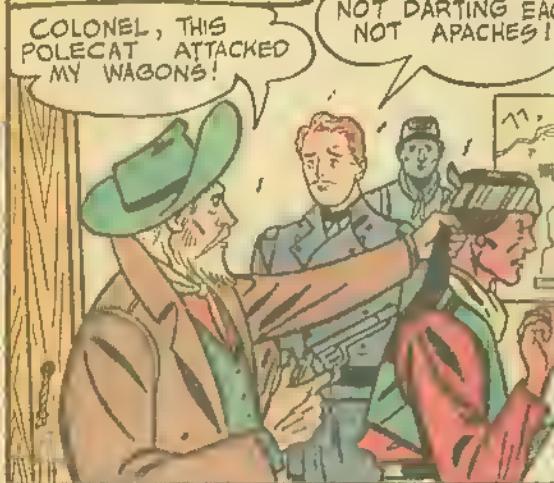
MINUTES LATER, IN THE COMMANDING OFFICER'S OFFICE ---

COLONEL, THIS POLECAT ATTACKED MY WAGONS!

NOT DARTING EAGLE! NOT APACHES!

MUNSEN IS MISTAKEN, SIR. THE INDIANS WERE COMANCHES!

COMANCHES! KIOWAS! APACHES! WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



THERE'S THIS DIFFERENCE, YOU IGNORAMUS! BLAME THE APACHES, AND THEY'LL HIT THE WAR TRAIL. MEN AND WOMEN AND CHILDREN WILL DIE! ALL BECAUSE OF YOUR PETTY HATE AND DISLIKE!

LOOK AT THOSE WAR ARROWS, SIR. THEY ARE COMANCHE ARROWS!

YOU'RE RIGHT, HOLT. THANKS A LOT FOR POINTING THIS OUT. WE DON'T WANT INJUSTICE DONE!

DARTING EAGLE GRATEFUL! BUT PALEFACE MAKE BAD ENEMY IN MUNSEN. HIM BAD! YOU TAKE THIS MEDICINE BAG. IT HELP YOU FIGHT MUNSEN!

THANK YOU, DARTING EAGLE!



TIM HOLT

MUNSEN WANT APACHES TO TAKE WAR PATH! THEN GREAT WHITE FATHER IN WASHINGTON TAKE AWAY APACHES' LAND. NOT GIVE TO THEM FOR RESERVATION. LAND HAS GOOD GRASS AND WATER. MUNSEN BUY IT CHEAP, THEN, MAKE BIG RANCH!

THERE GO MUNSEN NOW. TAKE FIREWATER IN WAGON TO MY PEOPLE. MAKE HEAP TROUBLE!

HMM! THE CAVALRY WILL BE CALLED IN. THEN MUNSEN WILL FILE CLAIM TO THE LAND!



THE SADDLE'S AS GOOD AS NEW, SO LET'S BE OFF! LET'S SEE WHAT'S IN THAT WAGON, MUNSEN. THE APACHES CAN'T PROTECT THEMSELVES-- SO IT'S UP TO DECENT WHITE MEN TO SAFEGUARD THEM!

SOMETIME LATER...



WAGON, MUNSEN. THE APACHES CAN'T PROTECT THEMSELVES-- SO IT'S UP TO DECENT WHITE MEN TO SAFEGUARD THEM.

GIT OUT O' HERE, HOLT-- LESS'N YUH WANT TO STOP HOT LEAD!

I SAID - LET'S SEE WHAT'S IN THAT WAGON!

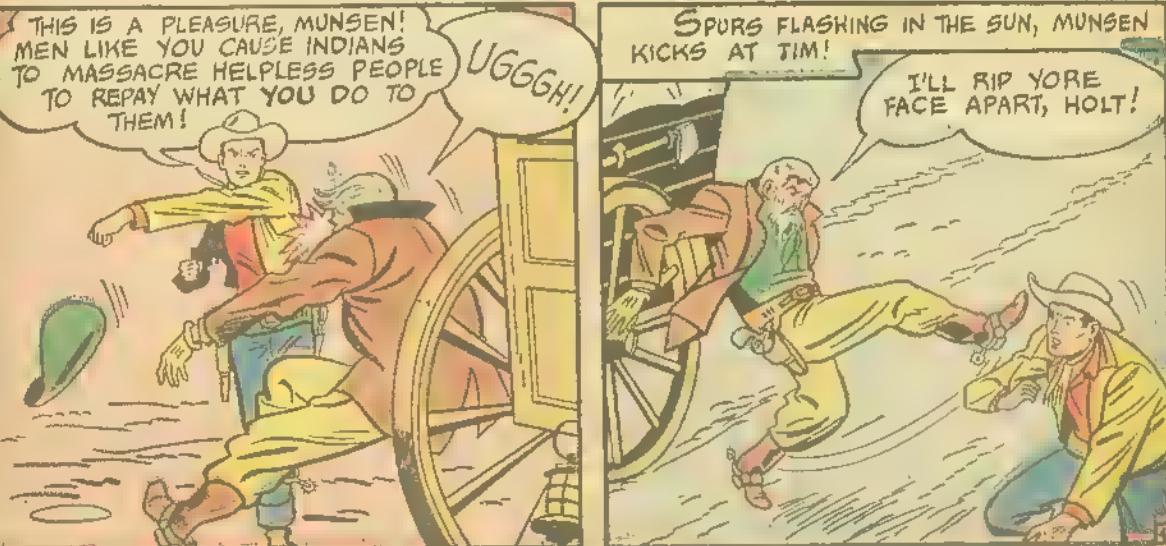
TAKE YORE HANDS OFF--!



THIS IS A PLEASURE, MUNSEN! MEN LIKE YOU CAUSE INDIANS TO MASSACRE HELPLESS PEOPLE TO REPAY WHAT YOU DO TO THEM!

UGGGH!

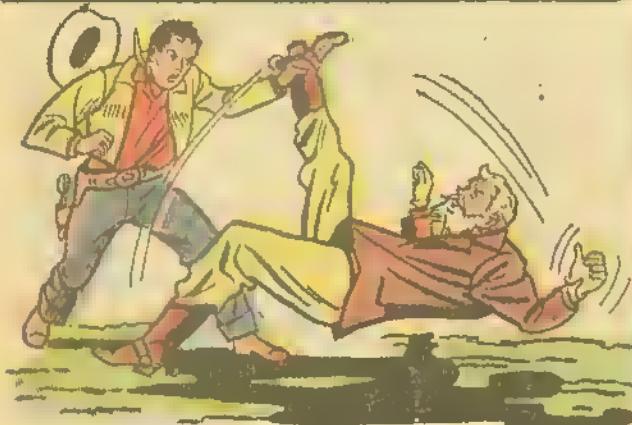
SPORS FLASHING IN THE SUN, MUNSEN KICKS AT TIM!



I'LL RIP YORE FACE APART, HOLT!

TIM HOLT

TIM SWAYS ASIDE JUST AS THE SPURS STAB AT HIS FACE - AND MISS! TAKING MUNSEN BY HIS ANKLE AND ADDING TO THE MOMENTUM OF THE KICK TIM THROWS HIS OPPONENT OFF BALANCE ---



PARTING EAGLE WAS RIGHT! THERE'S ENOUGH LIQUOR IN HERE TO FLOAT A BOAT!



WON'T TAKE LONG TO GET RID OF THEM... AND THE APACHES WILL BE SAFE!



THAT NIGHT, IN A SMALL SALOON JUST OUTSIDE THE FORT ---

IF HOLT HANGS AROUND HERE, HE'LL QUEER OUR GAME. WE'RE GETTIN' RID OF HIM - NOW! NO MAN CAN SMASH MY LIQUOR AN' LIVE!



LESS THAN AN HOUR LATER ---

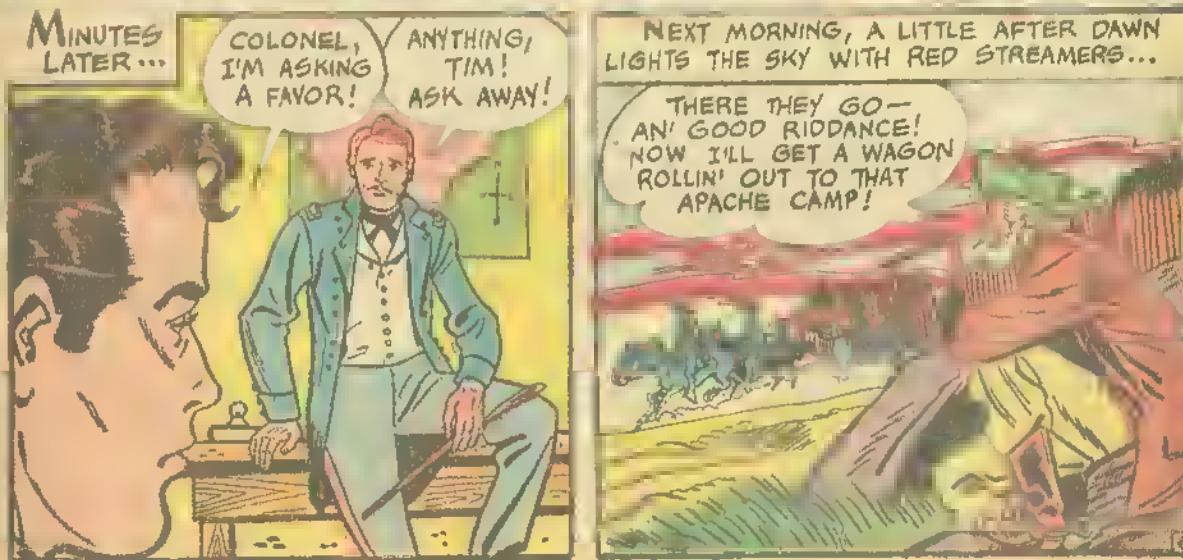
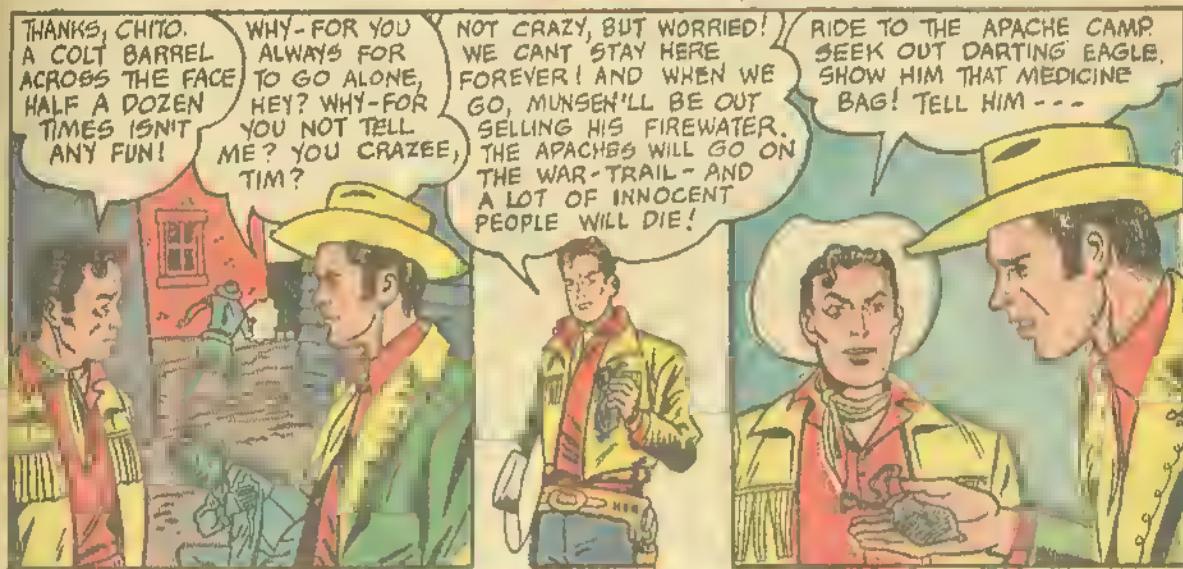


THAT'S RIGHT! HOLD HIS ARMS! GIVE ME ROOM TO WORK ON THAT FACE OF HIS WITH MY SIXGUN!

BRAVE, AREN'T YOU, MUNSEN!



TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT

SOME HOURS LATER, IN THE SHADOWS OF THE PAINTED BUTTES, CHITO JOINS TIM AND HIS COWBOYS --

DARTING EAGLE SAY HEES MEN WEEL PRETEND TO BUY FIREWATER. BUT COME QUEEK! HE SAY HE EES NOT SURE HOW LONG CAN KEEP THEM FROM DREENK!

AB -- HERE COMES HOLT AN' HIS COWHANDS!

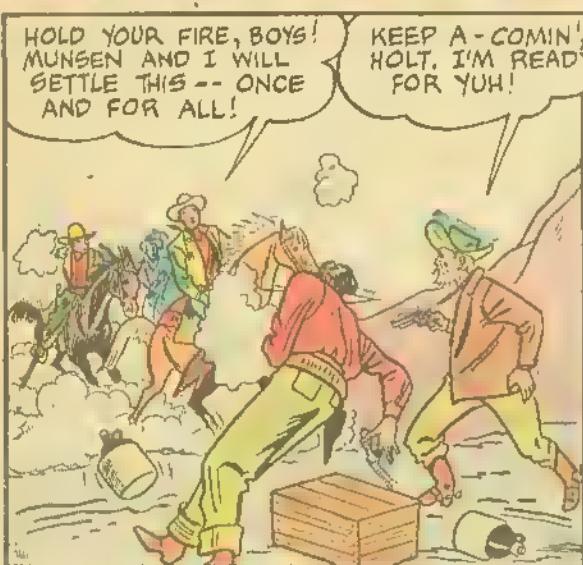
WHAT THE-???



HOLD YOUR FIRE, BOYS! MUNSEN AND I WILL SETTLE THIS -- ONCE AND FOR ALL!

KEEP A-COMIN', HOLT. I'M READY FOR YUH!

I'M EXPECTING THE COLONEL, MUNSEN, SO I WANT TO BE SURE YOU'RE HERE WHEN HE ARRIVES!



THE BEST WAY TO DO THAT -- IS TO PUT YOU TO SLEEP PRONTO!

LATER...

HERE'S THE EVIDENCE, COLONEL!

I'LL HAVE MUNSEN BEHIND BARS FOR THIS. AND I'LL MAKE SURE THAT HE LOSES HIS FREIGHTING CONTRACT -- AND THAT SOMEBODY WHO'S RELIABLE GETS IT!



WITH THE GRATEFUL HANDCLASP OF DARTING EAGLE STILL WARM IN HIS PALM, TIM LEADS HIS MEN AWAY FROM THE PAINTED BUTTES -- AND INTO NEW ADVENTURE... DON'T MISS THE NEXT ISSUE OF TIM HOLT!

BADGE OF THE LAWMAN

THE NIGHT sounds floated up from the single street of Gunsight Gap, but the man standing in the little hotel room did not hear them. His body was frozen with surprise, his mind rioting and churning with conjecture. Again Flip Carson bent over his gunny-sack on the bed, upended it and shook it. The marshal's badge was gone, there was no doubt, now!

He turned on a booteel and walked from the room, his lowslung Colts riding gently on his thighs. In his faded blue levis and worn flannel shirt with the string of his makings dangling from the pocket, he looked like any cowhand in from a ranch.

Flip stepped from the hotel out onto the board walk. His keen eyes took in the punchers moving on the street, the pools of light from the open doors of saloons and gambling halls. Down the street, past the town meeting house, was the sheriff's office. The little shack was dark, but Flip knew that many of the cow town sheriffs preferred to sit in darkness.

He moved easily through the men who crowded the street, moving from saloon to saloon. He put a hand on the knob of the door and opened it.

"Stand right there, stranger!" a voice rasped from the blackness.

Flip chuckled, and lifted his arms. He said, "Easy there, sheriff. I'm Carson, federal marshal. Came in to find out who wants a lawman's badge enough to steal it."

A match flared, touched the wick of a kerosene lamp swinging on a chain from the ceiling. A tall man, thin and wiry, turned to stare at Flip.

The sheriff said, "So that's what th' hombre was after—my badge! Almost caught him earlier tonight, right here in th' office. But he vamosed before I could throw lead."

Flip thumbed his broad-brimmed Stetson back on his head. "This is your town, sheriff. You must know who wants—or needs—a law badge!"

The sheriff shook his head, puzzlement written on his face. "Beats me, marshal."

Flip asked, "What was he like, this hombre who tried to rustle your badge? Did you see him? Hear anything that might give us a clue?"

With a calloused hand, the sheriff stroked his jaw thoughtfully. "Humm. Let's see, now. He was a medium-sized ranny, with a checked shirt an' the usual levis. Wore one gun, on his right hip. Had a funny kind of hat, with a mighty low crown."

Flip started. "Low crown? Folded down and shaped round, with a wide brim?"

"Why, yes. Do you know him?"

Flip shook his head. "No. But it's a hint. Reckon I'll mosey around an' see what I can dig up."

The mention of the low-crowned sombrero stirred a vague memory in Flip's subconscious. As he left the sheriff's office and went back up the street, he thought of "Oregon Cal" Walker, the desperado whose favorite stunt was to take a job in a town, learn stagecoach schedules, times of gold shipments, when the guards would be doubled, when they would be light. And Oregon Cal would one day vanish from town, hole up somewhere until the right moment came, and strike. He usually operated out of the pine hills of the northwest, or the lava flats of Idaho, but Flip could not rid himself of the notion that he might possibly have invaded the southwest.

Flip went across the dusty main street. The clerk in the stagecoach office was just turning out the light when Flip came in. The clerk looked annoyed, and snapped, "Closin' time, stranger. Last stage went out 'bout an hour ago anyhow. Got to wait 'til tomorrow."

Flip smiled. "I don't want a ticket, friend. Just information. Did you have another clerk in this office, up until recently?"

The clerk swore feebly. "Sure did! Quit on me tonight, just 'fore the stage went out. Been with me just long enough to break him in right, too!"

"He wore low-crowned hats, did he?"

"Huh! Reckon you know him. Well, you can tell him for me to stay out of Gunsight Gap. If he pokes his nose back here, I'll sure knock it flat for him!"

Flip grinned, waved a good-night, and stepped from the office just as the lamp blinked out. He was certain, now. Oregon Cal was down here in New Mexico, about to make a strike. Flip loosened his sixguns in their holsters, grimly. It formed a pattern. Walker wanted a badge to ride on the stage. With a marshal's badge to flash on the guard and driver, he could lull their suspicions. At the proper moment, Oregon Cal could cut out with his sixes, down the guard and driver, and make off with whatever swag the Concord held in its "boot."

Flip ran with short, jerky steps toward the hotel stables. His big white gelding whinnied as Flip entered the wide door. A stableboy ran from the corner, where he had been polishing a saddle. Flip tossed a coin which the boy caught in an outstretched hand.

"Watered and fed him, an' gave him a good rubdown, sir," grinned the boy. "He's ready to run."

"That's just what he's goin' to do, button," chuckled Flip, easing up into the kick. "See you later—maybe."

The moon was a silver circle in the blue night sky as Flip gave the white saddler its head, riding with loose reins. The rawboned horse fled over sand hummocks, into shallow washes, and up across a boulder field where the gaunt rocks made queer shadows in the moonlight.

The Gunsight Gap-Taos stage rounded the rim of the Agua Fria Peak and went straight west along the flats. Flip reasoned that Oregon Cal would make his move somewhere in the shelter of the pines before they hit the flats. If his gelding wanted to run long enough, he could cut through the boulder fields and hit the coach before it rounded the Peak and headed west.

After that—

Flip sighed and touched the worn walnut butts of his sixguns significantly.

* * *

Flip reined in the gelding in a stand of pines overlooking the Taos Trail. In the distance he could hear the trundling Concord stage as it came around a bend in the foothills that sloped down from Agua Fria. He jabbed a toe into the gelding's side, urging him downslope.

The stagecoach came into sight, swaying and bouncing. The driver leaned forward, reins in hands. Beside him sat a dark-faced guard, a Winchester slung across his knees. On top of the stage, eased down amid gunnysacks and valises, hunkered a broad-shouldered man in a black coat.

A momentary doubt gripped Flip. Neither of the two guards wore low-crowned hats. Neither of them wore checked shirts. And Oregon Cal would scarcely ride inside the coach if he intended to plunder it. The stage did not stop between Gunsight Gap and Taos, and if he attempted to swing out while it was moving, he would warn the guards in plenty of time.

Had he made a mistake? Were his calculations about Oregon Cal just so much wasted thinking?

He was on the road, now. The driver had seen him, was reining in. The guards lifted their rifles to cover him. The stage bounced to a halt, ten feet away.

Flip said, "I won't keep you, driver. I just wanted to ask directions to Santa Fe."

The driver lifted an arm and pointed. "Circle to the south, stranger. Reckon if yuh ride with us a ways, yuh'll come to the trail."

The guard beside the driver stretched and grinned. "Good thing yuh stopped us, friend. It's my turn to take it easy on top. Come on down here, Jim. I'll ride back there with the

The man in the black coat moved forward to the seat. The other dropped among the sacks and valises. He looked over at the white gelding and nodded.

"Mighty fine cayuse you have there."

Flip Carson stiffened. His right hand dropped toward the handle of his low-tied Colt. But his involuntary movement of surprise betrayed him.

The man on the stagecoach roof lifted his Winchester and pressed the trigger.

The two reports came as one. There had been no time to aim. A bullet ripped the fabric of Flip's shirtsleeve. His own quick snapshot had been just as close. But Flip triggered his gun faster than the man could work his rifle. Three reports blended into a long-drawn staccato thunder, and three round black dots appeared across the rifleman's shirtfront.

The driver yelped in fright and amazement. The guard swore and lifted his rifle, only to find himself looking down the long barrel of Flip's sixgun.

Flip said grimly, "Relax, gents. Maybe you don't know it, but that man is—was—Oregon Cal Walker! He figured to plant a couple of lead pellets into your backbones. I'm Marshal Carson from the Territorial Capitol."

The driver closed his mouth. He growled, "Yuh sure about them facts, stranger? This here man showed us *his* marshal's badge, when he asked for a ride to Taos. Where's *your*?"

Flip chuckled and holstered his Colt. "It was my badge he stole. Ask the sheriff, next time you're in Gunsight Pass. Where's *his* warbag?"

The driver reached under the seat, into the front boot, and drew out a gunnysack. Flip eased from the saddle and searched it. He drew out a lowcrowned sombrero, then his gleaming badge.

The driver grunted, "Funny kind o' headgear, ain't it?"

"Funny for the southwest," nodded Flip, pinning the badge to his vest. "But very ordinary to Oregon. That's what made me think of Oregon Cal right off. Folks down in these parts wear their hats with a high crown. Folks up Oregon way wear a low crown. But more than that, they call a horse a *brone* down here—up in Oregon they call him a *cayuse*!"

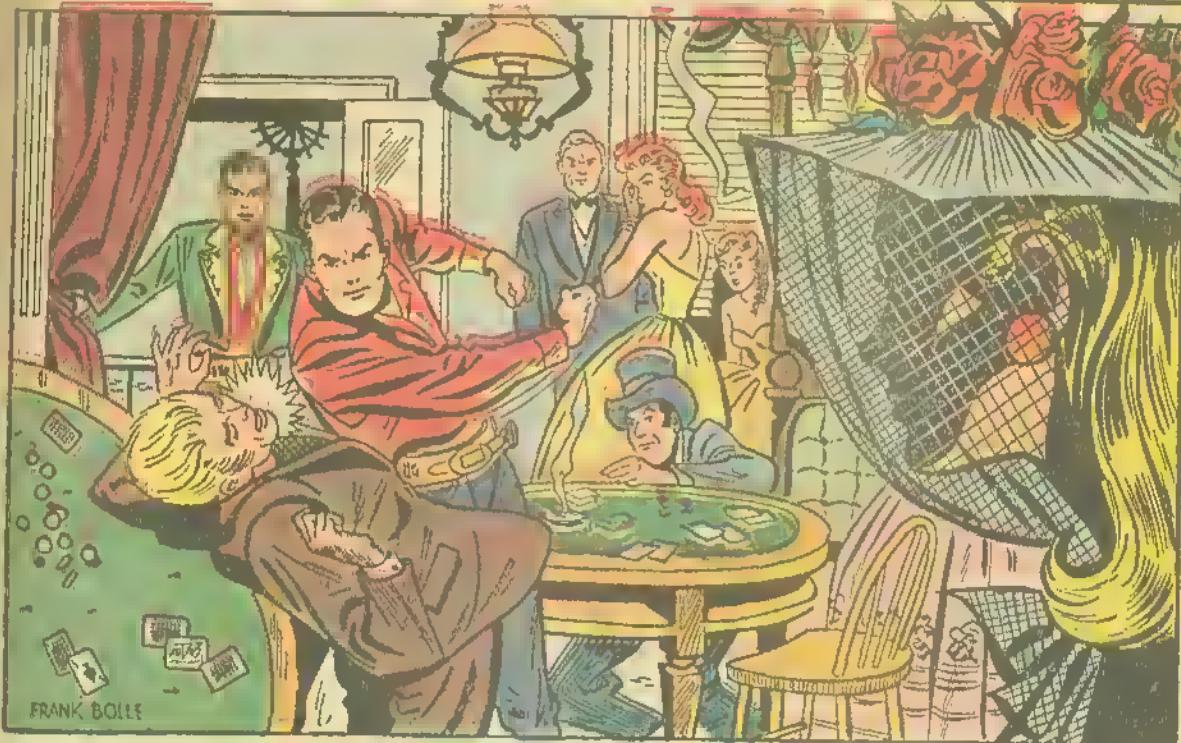
The guard swore his admiration. "That's how yuh picked him out of us three, huh? Brrr...mighty glad yuh didn't think he was me!"

Flip chuckled. "He was so tense that he realized at once his mistake. He tried to get me first, before he went for you. Lucky for all of us that he didn't!"

The driver lifted his reins. The guard waved a hand. The stage trundled off toward Taos.

TIM HOLT

TIM HOLT



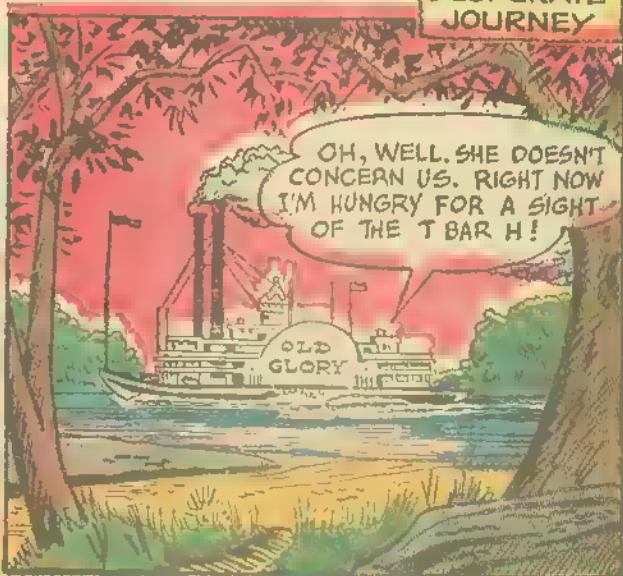
A GAMBLER WHO CHEATED SO THAT HE COULD LOSE — A FIGHT FOR LIFE IN A DREADED PRAIRIE FIRE — THESE ARE THE ELEMENTS THAT INVOLVED TIM HOLT AND CHITO AS THEY THUNDERED OFF THE PADDLEWHEELER OLD GLORY INTO A

DESPERATE JOURNEY

THE SPLASHING PADDLEWHEEL OF THE STEAMBOAT OLD GLORY THUNDERS IN THEIR EARS AS TIM AND CHITO TURN LAZILY AWAY FROM THE RAIL . . .

EES SMART WOMAN, TIM. WEETH THAT VEIL, SHE ADD MYSTERY TO HER BEAUTY!

I'VE NOTICED THAT. WONDER WHO SHE IS?



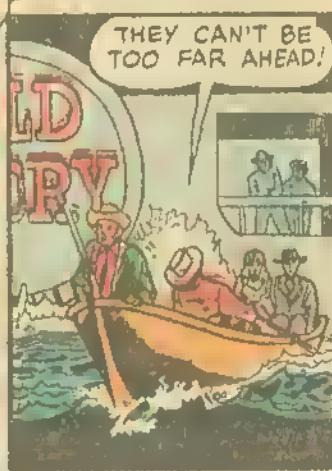
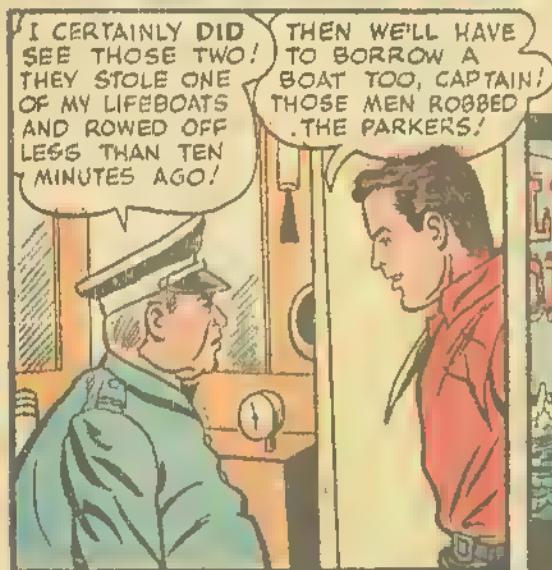
TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT

NEXT DAY, IN THE LITTLE COW-TOWN OF HANGKNOT ...

I'D RATHER YOU WAITED HERE, MISS PRISCILLA. THERE'S LIABLE TO BE MORE SHOOTING.

I'D BE A FINE ONE TO DESERT PAUL NOW. PLEASE, TIM. I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

DAY AFTER DAY TIM LEADS HIS LITTLE BAND ACROSS THE PRAIRIE FLATS. OCCASIONALLY, FAR AHEAD, HE CATCHES SIGHT OF TWO DISTANT, FLEEING FIGURES...

IN ANOTHER DAY, AT THIS PACE, WE'LL CATCH THEM AND RECOVER THAT MONEY FOR YOU, PAUL!



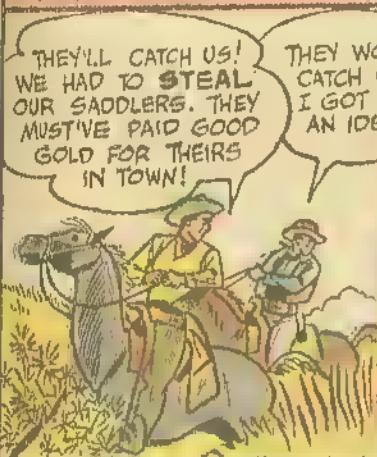
HIGH IN THE FOOTHILLS, TWO SNARLING MEN REIN IN WINDED HORSES ...

THEY'LL CATCH US! WE HAD TO STEAL OUR SADDLERS. THEY MUSTIVE PAID GOOD GOLD FOR THEIRS IN TOWN!

THEY WON'T CATCH US. I GOT ME AN IDEA!

YUH SEE THIS GRASS? IT BURNS, DON'T IT? AN' THE WIND IS BLOWIN' TOWARD THEM.

DOGGONE! YUH MEAN TO BURN 'EM ALIVE IN A PRAIRIE FIRE!



THE DRY GRASS SNAPS AND CRACKLES AS THE CRUDE TORCHES ARE TOUCHED TO IT! GREAT, ANGRY RED TONGUES FLARE UP TOWARD THE SKY!



MILES OUT ON THE UNPROTECTED FLATS ...

TIM! LOOK! WHAT EES EET?

FIRE! THOSE POLECATS ARE BURNING THE GRASS!



LIKE A HUNGRY MONSTER, THE GREAT RED FLAMES CONSUME THE DRIED GRASSES. SNAPPING, CRACKLING, BAKING THE EARTH BENEATH THE AIR ABOVE, THE FIRE RUSHES ON ---!



TIM HOLT



CHOKING IN THE THICK SMOKE, THEIR FEET SEARED BY THE SPREADING FLAMES, THEY STRUGGLE ON. SUDDENLY TIM CRIES OUT SHARPLY....

THIS WAY!
OVER THIS WAY.
I SEE WATER AHEAD
OF US...!



LIE DOWN, ALL OF YOU. I'LL SNAP OFF SOME OF THOSE LILYPAD STEMS. WE CAN BREATH THROUGH THEM - WHILE THE FIRE PASSES OVER US!



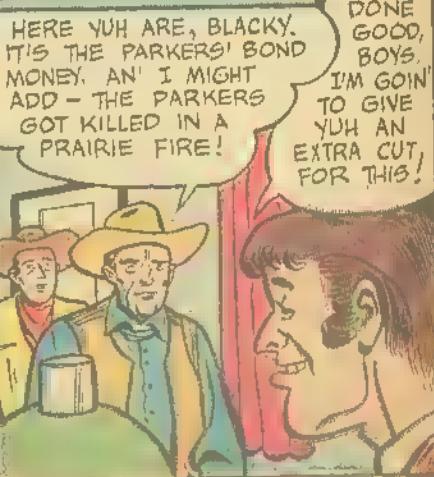
WET AND DRENCHED, BUT ALIVE, TIM AND CHITO AND THE PARKERS LIE SUBMERGED, AS THE PRAIRIE WILDFIRE LEAPS ACROSS THE WATER . . .



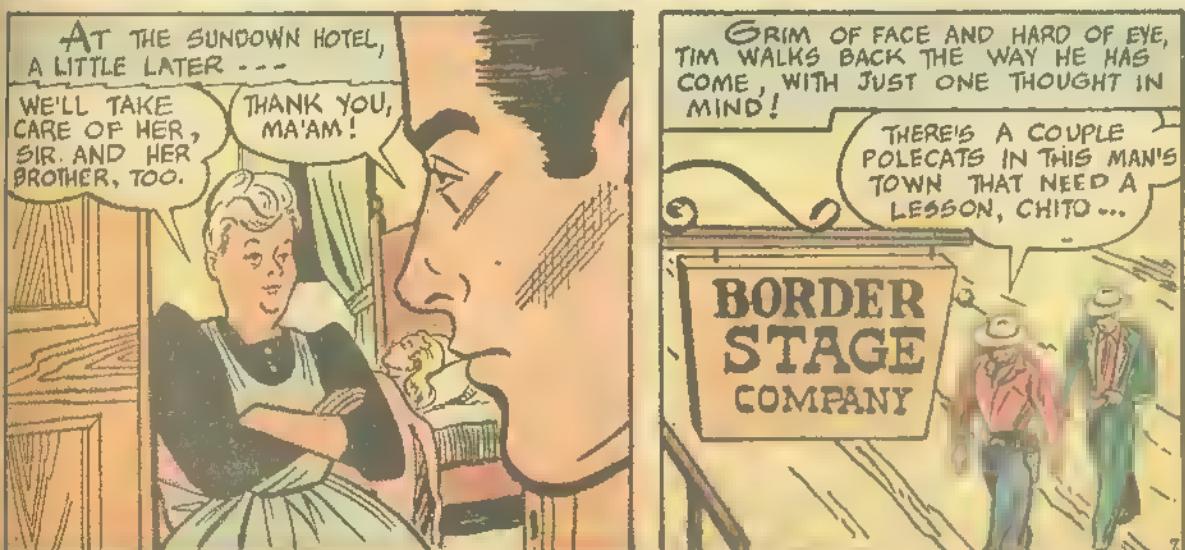
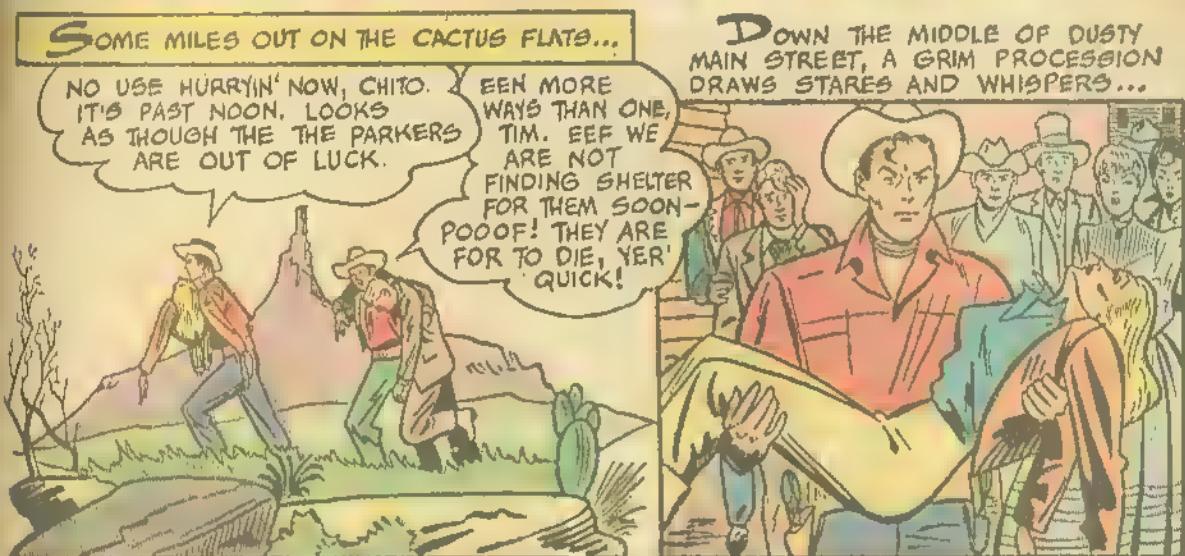
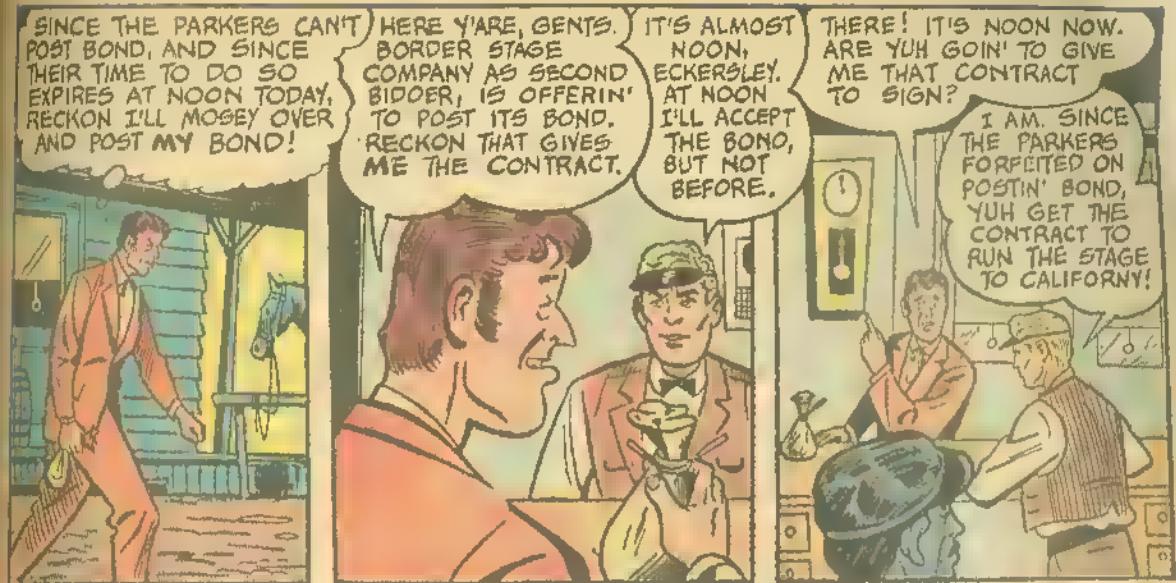
AN HOUR LATER . . .



TWO DAYS LATER,
IN BORDER CITY —



TIM HOLT



TIM HOLT

